NDIA Honors Saronic CEO Dino Mavrookas with 2026 James Forrestal Industry Leadership Award

Former Navy SEAL recognized for leadership in maritime innovation and commitment to rebuilding America's defense industrial capacity



From left: John Bonsell, NDIA Board Chair; Dino Mavrookas, founder and CEO of Saronic; and the Hon. Gabe Camarillo, NDIA Board Vice Chair, at the presentation of the 2026 James Forrestal Industry Leadership Award.

WASHINGTON, DC, VA, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) has named Dino Mavrookas, co-founder and CEO of Saronic Technologies, the 2026 recipient of the James Forrestal Industry Leadership Award, presented annually to a senior industry executive who exemplifies Forrestal's vision, leadership, and support for a robust defense industrial base (DIB).

A former U.S. Navy SEAL who completed 11 years of service and eight combat deployments, Mavrookas co-founded Saronic in 2022 to build autonomous maritime systems for the United States and its allies.

That founding mission was put to the test earlier this year, when a Saronic-built Corsair autonomous surface vessel helped rescue two U.S. Army aviators after their AH-64 Apache went down near the Strait of Hormuz, recovering them from the water and delivering them to be airlifted to safety, the first publicly acknowledged U.S. military sea rescue by an unmanned surface vessel.

"Dino Mavrookas saw a critical need, founded a company, risked private capital on an innovative new technology, and rapidly placed that capability in the hands of America's warfighters," said the Hon. David L. Norquist, NDIA president and CEO. "His leadership reflects the ingenuity, urgency, and commitment our nation needs to grow and reinvigorate the defense industrial base."

Saronic has backed that vision with two major industrial investments. In 2025, the company acquired the former Gulf Craft shipyard in Franklin, Louisiana, preserving a skilled shipbuilding workforce and anchoring a $300 million expansion of the site. Separately, Saronic is planning a $3 billion investment in Port Alpha, a next-generation shipyard in Brownsville, Texas, built around software-defined shipbuilding methods to eventually produce both defense and commercial vessels at scale.

"Congress can authorize investment in the industrial base. It takes industry leaders to actually build it," said John Bonsell, Chair of the NDIA Board of Directors. "Dino Mavrookas has taken that responsibility seriously, from the shipyard floor in Louisiana to the plans now underway in Texas."

“Secretary Forrestal understood that strategy is only as strong as the industrial capacity behind it. America faces that challenge again,” said Dino Mavrookas, co-founder and chief executive officer of Saronic Technologies. “Rebuilding our maritime strength is essential to strengthening national security, deterring conflict and giving those who serve every possible advantage. I’m deeply honored to receive this award and to carry its mission forward in honor of the engineers, technicians and builders at Saronic who have committed themselves to it every day.”

The James Forrestal Industry Leadership Award is named for the nation's first U.S. Secretary of Defense.

Mavrookas received the award on Sept. 9, 2026, at NDIA's Emerging Technologies for Defense Conference & Exhibition, held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

About NDIA

The National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) is America's leading defense industry association promoting national security. NDIA provides a legal and ethical forum for the exchange of information between industry and government on national security issues. NDIA and its members foster the development of the most innovative and superior equipment, training, and support for warfighters and first responders through its divisions, local chapters, affiliated associations, and events. For more information, visit NDIA.org

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